



Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

New Delhi, India • London, UK • Accra, Ghana

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic & Social Council of the United Nations

Date: 11/04/2017

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Maja Daruwala

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To,
Shri Ratnakar Gaikwad
State Chief Information Commissioner
Maharashtra Information Commission
13th Floor, New Administrative Building
Mantralaya
Mumbai – 400 032
Tel: 022-22856078

Dear sir,

Sub: Submission of complaint for the *suo motu* disclosure of all information sought by RTI activist and human rights defender Shri Suhas Haldankar in Pune district, Maharashtra

I wish to bring to your notice a recent incident of murder of an RTI activist and human rights defender in Maharashtra. The deceased is one, Shri Suhas Haldankar, aged about 35 years and a resident of Pimpri-Chinchwad area in Pune district, Maharashtra. The murder is said to have occurred late in the evening of 9th April, 2017.

Shri Suhas Haldankar is said to have filed several requests for information under *The Right to Information Act, 2005* (RTI Act) regarding the manner of working of the Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation in order to expose irregularities in the provision of civic amenities in that area. According to media reports (enclosed), Shri Haldankar is said to have exposed the poor conditions of roads, overflowing state of drains and broken footpaths despite the municipal authorities claiming to have spent taxpayer funds on their repair. He is also said to have exposed the filthy conditions of public toilets meant for women constructed under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. Media reports quote local officials who held him in high regard.

Shri Haldankar is said to have exposed several instances of maladministration through RTI. In the most recent case which is being directly linked to his murder, he is said to have exposed the diversion and misuse of security personnel meant to guard the Bal Bhawan run by the local municipal corporation.

When inducements and threats failed to curb his activism, a group of 11 persons some of whom were affected by the exposé of diversion of security guards, are said to have battered him to death with cement concrete blocks, last Sunday.

CHRI urges the Commission to take cognizance of this complaint and seek reports from the Pune district administration about RTI applications filed by the Late Suhas Haldankar that may be pending with any public

authority. CHRI also urges you to order the proactive disclosure of all information sought by him prominently on the main page of the official website of the district administration and also on the notice boards of the concerned public authorities. **This action is required to be taken urgently in order to frustrate the ignoble motives of the perpetrators and conspirators of the crime to keep the information hidden from public scrutiny.**

I will send you any other reports that I may receive from local civil society groups that inquire into the circumstances leading to the murder of Shri Suhas Haldankar in due course.

Thanking you,
Yours sincerely,

S. S. Venkatesh Nayak

Venkatesh Nayak
Programme Coordinator
Access to Information Programme

11/4/17